

L.S.M. 9

The crew of L.S.M. 9 started to report to Little Creek, Virginia Amphibious Training Base in March 1944. They came from most of the states east of the Mississippi River. They entered the Navy mostly in July, August and September 1943. First to Boot Camp and then to a training school. Very few were rated. They were going to have to prove themselves on board ship. There were two different age groups in the crew. Most of the younger men were 18 year olds and the older men in the lower 30's. We lived in old C.C.C. barracks in a camp built in the 1930's. This camp was originally built to get the unemployed off the streets and give them some work. The officer's lived in those new quonset huts. They had reported the first week in March 1944. The officer's first trained on L.C.I. 574 April 6 to 12th. The crew and officers trained on L.C.I. 503 from April 20th to 3rd May. We cruised around the Chesapeake Bay stopping each night at one of those beautiful towns bordering the Bay. No leave for the training crew, but the L.C.I. crew was able to go ashore. What a nice way to spend the war. One thing that did happen was when we cruised the Potomac River we entered an artillery range and caught heavy shelling, luckily we didn't get hit. That ended the training.

On 12 May from Norfolk, Virginia our crew boarded a train for Houston, Texas. We went from Norfolk, VA via Columbus, OH to St. Louis, MO then on to Houston, TX. On the way to St. Louis the whole train stopped in West Virginia for the family of Isaac Thompson a Steward Mate 2/C so he could say good-bye to his family. They were all along the tracks, his wife and children. He is still alive today (1993) at the age of 85. A very sad farewell to a family that had nothing. We traveled in two railroad cars. One was a First Class Pullman, the other a troop transport - a square box with racks of bunks for sleeping. The officers, rated non-commissioned men and some of the other top hands were in the Pullman car. We arrived in St. Louis in the evening with an hour or so lay over. Right away some of the older men asked the Captain if they could go shopping for some drinks in the station. The Captain gave them an OK but don't miss the train. As we headed south to Houston wherever the train stopped, people were waiting by the tracks with sandwiches and drinks.

22 May 1944 - We arrived in Houston and reported to Supervisor of Shipbuilding at Brown Shipbuilding in Houston, TX for duty in connection with fitting out the U.S.S. L.S.M. 9 and for duty on board when commissioned at Houston, Texas.

In Houston the crew was split. Ensign Biswanger (Exec. at that time) was sent to Camp Wallace, TX with most of the non-rated crew, as there were no sufficient accommodations in or near Brown Shipyard. He remained there almost to the date of commissioning. One of his main jobs was to draw up the watch, quarter and station bill for the ship. We had never seen an L.S.M. before, as there were no L.S.M.'s at Little Creek at the time we trained there. L.S.M. 9 looked good to us compared to an L.C.I.

On 1 June 1944 we took the ship down to Galveston, Texas. We were home-ported at the T.C.I. (Tenn. Coal & Iron) docks. From there we went on daily shake-down cruises.

The Gulf was very rough at that time. The whole crew and even the training officers became sea sick. The sides of the ship were stained with strawberry ice cream and everything else we ate. These ships had a very high draft - only 3 feet in the bow and five feet aft, so they rolled very easily and slapped at the waves going forward.

11 June at flank speed on shakedown, the starboard blower on the main engine let go. We limped back to port on one engine. These were Fairbanks Morse 10 cylinder opposed piston engines, the heart of the ship. The Captain had great difficulty docking the ship with only one engine. He started and stopped the port engine so many times we ran out of compressed air. (These engines started with compressed air.) We finally docked with the help of the crew pulling us close with hawsers. An attempt to repair the engine was made in Galveston by the crew and employee's from Todd Dry-docks in Galveston. It was found that when the starboard engine blower pulverized it was impossible to clean out the entire engine.

21 June 1944 - Went back to Brown Shipbuilding on one engine. We were met there by the Tug Texas. He backed us into a dock that was empty. On the way in we knocked down a lot of scaffolding on L.S.M.'s that were under construction. This was a very narrow river where these L.S.M.'s were built. They had to be launched sideways.

At Brown, it was a quick job. They cut the tank deck out and lifted out the old engine and put in a new one.

30 June 1944 we sailed back to Galveston and went through more shakedown cruises.

7 July 1944 we sailed from Galveston, arriving at Coco Solo Submarine base in Panama. We laid over one day so some of the crew had liberty.

15 July we went through the Panama Canal and headed for San Diego with two L.C.I.'s. En route we saw many giant sea turtles, whales and sea lions. We arrived in San Diego on 27 July and docked at pier 3 north repair yard. This was the weekend and the crew was looking for liberty. No liberty for the crew, but the Captain went ashore as he lived in Los Angeles. He said he wanted the ship ready to be painted as it was a light gray and starting to rust already. The crew made a "night procurement" at the repair yard. Red lead primer and a very dark, almost black gray. All weekend the crew scraped the rust and touched up with red lead. But somebody had another idea while using the red lead. As usual there was a camel between the ship and the dock. A very nice place to stand and paint. Somebody painted a large sign on the side of the ship. "Last Sea Mission" in big red letters. The Captain returned to the ship sometime during the night. The next morning we went out for more training. When the flag ship saw our sign painted on the side of the ship, we were called to pull along side. The poor Captain came back red faced and the training and training continued.

On the 4th of August, 1944 we sailed for Long Beach, CA arriving on the 5th. We went to a shipyard, Craig Shipbuilding Long Beach, CA. This was the oldest ship yard we ever saw, even the crane was made out of wood and was hand powered. I didn't think they were ever going to finish the job. In the meantime we had very nice liberty in California. The job was to remove two forward 20mm guns and replace them with a 40mm gun. Also paint the ship in green, black and brown camouflage.

28 August 1944 we sailed for San Diego arriving on the 29th. We sailed up the ship channel in San Diego and when we looked to our port side, there was a bunch of Marines waving us ashore. We beached and took on six Sherman tanks for the Co. B 5th Tank Battalion U.S.M.C.

30 August 1944 we sailed for Hilo, Hawaii in accompany with L.S.M. 8. A very nice trip across. We arrived Hilo 8 September 1944 in the late afternoon.

The Captain gave two thirds of the ship liberty that night after chow until 10 P.M., but the catch was you had to have on your uniform the new amphibious shoulder patch. Well to find a needle and thread was something. Most of us got off about dark and had about one hour walking through town on a dirt road.

9 September 1944- We sailed around to the west side of Hawaii, destination Kawaihae, Maure Beach. We beached and unloaded the tanks, their destination Camp Tarawa. Departed Maure Beach and headed for Pearl Harbor.

10 September - Arrived Pearl Harbor, proceeded to Middle lock and tied up at the Oklahoma buoy. The Oklahoma buoy was the old U.S.S. Oklahoma, she had been sunk and capsized in the attack on Pearl, December 7, 1941. It was later decided not to refit her. While maneuvering to tie up to the Oklahoma, the starboard propeller hit a submerged object damaging it.

We waited for dry docking and the crew had liberty. Trips were arranged for the crew to take tours of the pineapple fields on the narrow gauge railroad. There was also a branch of this railroad that took you into Honolulu for liberty, 10:00AM to 3:00PM, don't miss the train back.

We finally went into dry dock with five other ships. This was something to see - six ships in one dry dock. This huge dry-dock was the very one the U.S.S. Pennsylvania and other ships damaged in the Japanese attack of 7 December 1941 had been berthed in for repairs less than three years prior. As the water was pumped out and started to reach a low level the dry dock was surrounded by Hawaiians all carrying bats and paddles. It looked like we were all going to be attacked. As the water level lowered in the dry-dock you could see all the fish swimming around. This is what they wanted. They climbed down the sides of the dry dock and started batting the fish around. What a catch they had.

We returned to the Oklahoma buoy and tied up alongside another L.S.M. which was loaded with long rubber hoses full of T.N.T. They were going to work with underwater demolition. They picked it up at N.C.T.D. Maui Island.

3 October 1944 we sailed for Maui with a cargo but were lucky we came back to Pearl empty.

14 October we sailed in a convoy of L.S.T.'s and L.S.M.'s with S.C.'s as our escorts for Eniwetok. We arrived 26 October and stayed overnight. We had received a talk radio in Pearl but never had used it. All hell broke out that night as every comedian got on the air and started telling jokes and dirty stories. The convoy commander finally got on the radio to squash it. Our voice radio call was Poodle 9, by signal light it was X-ray 4009. On October 31 we arrived at Guam in the evening but were told not to enter the harbor at night. We sailed around the Island all night and entered the harbor 1 November. We unloaded our cargo of small boats and passengers and departed on 2 November.

20 October we had crossed international date line going westward. Went from Friday, 20 October to Sunday, 22 October at midnight.

4 November we arrived in Ulithi Atoll. Looked like the whole fleet was here. A typhoon came up and we started to ride it out with our 2000lb stern anchor. Received message for all ships anchored with stern anchors and cable to haul them in as the violent jerking at the ship could cut the cable. We re-anchored with 600lb bow anchor and chain. At the height of the storm we had the main engines going full ahead, anchored just to maintain our position. We held position.

12 November with new fuel and provisions from a ship made of cement we departed Ulithi for Hollandia, New Guinea with same convoy.

15 November - We crossed the equator and became shellbacks.

16 November - We arrived in Hollandia, New Guinea. We bent another screw the last night out so had to wait to get into dry-dock and replace another screw. The dry dock we went into was the floating type towed out from the U.S. While waiting for dry-docking, some of the crew had liberty ashore in a Navy recreation area. This area was fenced in, just a flat, sunny hole. All there was to do was drink the beer you brought from your ship and be annoyed by the native children trying to sell you a Japanese souvenir for a can of beer. At 5:00 PM, an Army truck would come along and pick them up. As they were leaving, they would sing "You are My Sunshine".

Thanksgiving 1944 - Spent in dry-dock changing screw.

25 November - Sailed from Hollandia with other L.S.M.'s and arrived in Cape Gloucester, New Britain on the 26th.

28 November - Departed Cape Gloucester and arrived in Finschhafen, New Guinea for a load of amtracks. We broke our bow ramp cables so had to stay overnight for repairs. Had some Australians working for us installing the new cables.

30 November - Went back to Cape Gloucester, New Britain and spent next week hauling material from larger ships to the beach and finally took on a combat load.

8 December - Sailed from Cape Gloucester and arrived in Manus, Admiralty Islands on the 9th. Spent the next few days getting supplies aboard.

14 December - Unloaded combat load and went back to New Britain with L.S.M. 14 with 150 troops aboard. We were beached for a week and fed troops who were working ashore. The crew had swimming in a fresh water river (Unamei River). Lt. Biswanger and Ed Stevens and two others took the dinghy from the ship and rowed up that river to do some sightseeing. At the opposite end of New Britain from Cape Gloucester was the big Japanese base of Rabaul, which (although isolated and by-passed) survived until the end of the war. The other pastime was target shooting and looking for cat-eyes. A Cat-eye was a colorful piece of a sea-snail's shell.

We picked up a jeep here. Rumor had it that our skipper had traded off medical Whiskey to some army officer to get that jeep. We painted it a dark battleship gray. From the Conn you could easily see a volcano not too far from us smoking away day and night.

22 December - Left New Britain with 250 troops and 17 officers aboard for overnight trip to Manus.

Christmas Eve - We received our first mail in a long time but no packages.

25 December 1944 - Christmas Day - We beached to pick up tanks but water was too deep so we had to retract from beach and find a better beach. In retracting we bent starboard screw so were dry-docked and spent the night changing another screw. Next morning went back to beach. Spent 6 beachings and couldn't get close enough to shore. Finally went in at full speed and went up high and dry. Spent two days and nights trying to get off beach. Finally got off at high tide with help of two sea going tugs, two L.C.M.'s and two bulldozers but bent another screw in process. Dry-docked in LSD # 6, replaced screws and again beached and took on a load of mail for Army troops in Lingayen Gulf. Mail was mostly Christmas packages. It poured rain for a week so mail got badly soaked. We also took a tank and crew aboard. These L.S.M.'s carried two spare propellers. After all these propeller changes, it was felt that the ship had nine lives. A black cat with a red suit, the number 9 on its breast and boxing gloves on its front paws was painted on the front of the Conn. Gold propellers were painted on the side of the Conn to show how many we had lost. At a later date we were told to remove the paintings.

4 January, 1945 - Departed Manus and arrived in Hollandia on the 6th. We discharged tank and crew and went to repair base to get hole in hull patched.

10 January - We departed Hollandia in merchant ship convoy and we acted as rescue ship for the convoy. One of the ships in that merchant convoy had a helicopter, the first one we had ever seen. It often flew over our ships, apparently looking for Japanese subs.

15 January 1945 - Arrived Leyte, P.I. Beached and unloaded sacks of mail. Made several beachings unloading merchant ships. One of our cargo's was new army uniforms for the 77th Army division. We were able to put our jeep ashore. One trip we made was from Red Beach to Tacloban to pick up our mail. Driver Lt. Biswanger with D.J. Martin SM 3/c and Warren Keim GM 3/c. We all carried side arms and carbine rifles. When we anchored in Leyte Gulf at night the deck watch and signal watch were armed with WWI Springfield rifles. Shoot anything that moved in the water at night. The alert was suicide swimmers. It got dangerous on deck with the ricochet bullets flying off the water.

22 January - Departed Leyte in convoy of L.S.T.'s and merchant ships bound for Luzon. Our cargo was 50 gallon drums of hi-test gasoline. Arrived at Lingayen Gulf, Luzon on 27th. We then caught up with our old flotilla.

31 January - Left Lingayen Gulf with convoy of L.S.M.'s, L.S.T.'s and cargo ships and arrived in Leyte on 5 February. Next few weeks were spent hauling supplies, mostly ammunition from ship to beach. Later it was loaded back aboard to be put on Navy transports ready for Okinawa. Got provisions aboard, first fresh provisions in a long time.

12 March 1945 we loaded 3 Pontoon tanks, one truck, and one half track, these were Sherman tanks with pontoons attached to the sides, front and rear and were made to float. We had to leave the jeep on the beach. Also S 1/C Motes missed the ship. When he caught up with us in Okinawa he told the Captain that he got knocked out when a coconut fell from a tree and hit his head. We also acquired a load of monkeys.

As we transported troops from shore to the APA's and AKA's they carried their pets with them. The S.P.'s and M.P.'s on board these ships wouldn't let them take them aboard so they just let them loose on our ship.

25 March, 1945 we sailed from Leyte to Okinawa, Japan. On board, one truck, one half-track, three Sherman tanks with pontoons, six monkeys, one parrot, a still for making alcohol and a bottle of coconut wine in the first aid boxes in the 20mm gun tubs. The tanks belonged to Co. B 711 Tank Batt. 7th Army Division.

On Easter Sunday, 1 April 1945 we arrived at Okinawa. L.S.M. 9 was to be the seventh assault wave on Purple Beach. We followed in six waves of amphibious tractors. We went in on one engine at 1/3 speed. A few mortar shells kept splashing in front of the ship. Our slow speed fooled them. The commander of the tanks was in our crows nest as we approached the beach, hoping to get a better view above all the smoke. We went in as close as

possible to the reef and the tanks drove off the ships and dropped into the water. We lost one bow ramp cable as the tanks went off. We were told only to turn to our port side when leaving the beach area. The Captain gave the order full left rudder, port back full, starboard ahead full. So much smoke came out of the engines that the A.G.C. 14 U.S.S. Teton flagship called us by signal light to see if we had been hit by enemy fire. We were told to come alongside the flagship. Captain Olson was called aboard the flagship and you could see he got a big handshake for a job well done. We had come a long way from "Last Sea Mission". The next two weeks we spent hauling in supplies. One day we were on the reef with our stern in deep water, the Army's 27th Division came ashore. They climbed aboard our stern and walked off the bow ramp on to the coral reef, as there L.C.V.P.'s could not beach. The one load that we hauled in was the 90 mm anti-aircraft shells. This was the beginning of the end for the ship. They gave us a "flat ass ton load". The whole well deck was just filled with the 90mm's. We went into the beach (coral reef) at high tide over the top of the reef and just sat there.

First they sent out Army Ducks, trucks that could float with a propeller. When the tide went out, out came Army trucks, 6 by 6. As each vehicle came aboard you could feel the ship crunch forward and then backward as the trucks went aft. This went on for two days. This was the first night we would spend sitting on the reef. That night during the air-raid "Washing Machine Charlie" came along and strafed the reef with one machine gun. He made no hits. We were told to hold our fire. To keep the ship going when the tide went out Lt. Sinclair's Engineers took fire hoses with a submersible pump attached plus electric and dropped it into deep water off the stern of the ship so we would have electric power and fire and flushing when the tide went out.

When we finally were unloaded and floated free, we found fuel oil coming out of the drinking fountain. Edward Evelock Y3/C reported that the bulkheads were coming through the deck plates in the troop quarter where his office was. Many other bulkheads damaged. The rumors floated around that they were going to do no more beaching with us. The worst was picket duty.

Besides the hull damage, the radar and radio quit. We didn't know that President Roosevelt had died until we asked another L.S.M. why all the ships were flying the flag at half mast. In the meantime, we made smoke at night. We were stationed between the beach and U.S.S. Salt Lake City to cover her with smoke at night for protection of air raids. But, she could still fire her big guns for troop support when needed, right over our head. We went to G.O. 75 times in the first 23 days at Okinawa. We finally were sent to Kerama Relto Okinawa Gunto. 19 April, made smoke every night to protect U.S.S. Arkansas.

25 April, 1945 we departed Okinawa for Saipan.

1 May, 1945 - arrived Saipan, which looked like civilization once again. Islands were all lit up at night, newspapers flown out from Honolulu and several sacks of mail were waiting for us. We tied up to U.S.S. Dixie, a repair ship. They went into the tanks and did welding.

27 May 1945 - We celebrated the first anniversary of the L.S.M. 9 with a turkey dinner, ice cream and cake, and gave thanks for not having a single casualty in a war of peril. The crew painted the ship with that same paint from San Diego.

11 June 1945 - Having completed repairs we departed Saipan for Tinian. Arrived at Tinian and we spent 11 days waiting to load Seabees and equipment. Went ashore to view B-29's and sold last of monkeys to pilots.

22 June 1945 - We completed loading Seabees and equipment and returned to Saipan to replace provisions. We grabbed as much as we could when they weren't looking.

24 June 1945 - Departed Saipan and arrived in Eniwetok on 28 June and unloaded Seabees and equipment. Lt. Biswanger described all the stars and Southern Cross to the night watches.

1 July 1945 - Departed Eniwetok, bound south across the equator and arrived in Tulagi, Solomon Islands with L.S.M. 242 on 6 July. As we arrived in Tulage, there was a large billboard on one of the hills quoting "Bull" Halsey. "Kill Japs, Kill more Japs. If you do your part, you will help kill yellow bastards." Lt. William Marinis was transferred to L.S.M. 242, was initiated into Royal Domain, and became a shellback.

7 July - Departed Tulagi and went to Banika, Russells, Solomon Islands. This vicinity was very beautiful.

9 July 1945 - Left the Russells with a load of road building machinery and arrived in Eniwetok on 15 July.

15 July 1945 - Departed Eniwetok and arrived in Guam on 21 July where we unloaded our cargo. Signal men Martin and Huff went for training on nan lights.

26 July 1945 - We left Guam and arrived back in Saipan on 27 July, wondering what would be next.

4 August 1945 - We received orders and left for Pearl Harbor. We couldn't believe it could happen to us. Captain Olson was in the hospital in Saipan so Badgett took over command. Captain Olson returned when he heard we were going to Pearl.

As we headed back to Pearl Harbor, there were two things that worked on the ship, a small 45 RPM record player with only one record, The Easter Parade, and one of the crew members had a home style radio on board. For some reason we were able to pick up Station WLWL Cincinnati, OH. That gave us the news of the Atom bombing and the final surrender of Japan. When the Japs gave up, Admiral Halsey sent out this message to the fleet, which we received by flashing light, "shoot down all enemy aircraft in a friendly fashion, if they approach you."

We turned on the ships running lights for the first time, heading for Pearl Harbor. We also flew our largest flag.

19 August 1945 Arrived in Pearl Harbor after a plenty rough trip. The first thing we did was celebrate our return to civilization.

The ship was examined by Naval Engineers at a dock in Honolulu Harbor. It was determined that it was not worth repairing and was declared unseaworthy, so we were ordered to return to San Pedro. We departed Pearl Harbor with 120 Navy personnel aboard heading to California 21 September 1945.

To put 120 Navy personnel on board an L.S.M. they had to make sleeping quarters for them. These ships only had quarters for six tank crews aft and about 30 men. So they took angle irons and cut one inch pieces and welded them to the tank deck so a cot could fit in and not slide around. Next, make an angle iron frame over the well deck and cover it with canvas. We loaded on the 120 men and set sail from Hickam wharf with L.S.M. 162 leading the way. We followed L.S.M. 2, other ships in the convoy L.S.M. 25, 209, 242, 214 and 176.

About two days out the rains came and the canvas collapsed on the men. They all retreated to the troop quarters. How they slept, I was afraid to look. There was a radar repairman on the ship so we tried to get him to repair our radar. He tried, but threw his arms up as hopeless.

As we approached the California coast, the fog set in. We just closed up to L.S.M. 2, which we were following and followed her white water wake. We arrived in San Pedro Harbor, 30 September 1945 one hour ahead of time, as we didn't know about daylight savings time. We were greeted with the future. A lone F-80 fighter jet plan flew over as if to greet us and welcome us home. This plane, the Lockheed Shooting Star, was the first jet plane we had ever seen. No band, no fanfare for our passengers, who were very happy to get off. While at Hickman Wharf, loading our passengers, the starboard auxiliary engine quit. We went home with only the port auxiliary working. When we finally tied up to the other L.S.M.'s in Long Beach Harbor, the port auxiliary engine quit. We took power from L.S.M. 2, the rest of the time we were on the 9. Nothing ever ran again, we had made it home with just hours to spare.

The L.S.M. 9 was later considered beyond economical repair, it was decommissioned 20 December 1945 by Lt. J.J. Temple and was ordered to be struck from Navy Register and scrapped on 8 January 1946 SecNav 1tr ser. 1525P414. It was released to Navy Vessel Disposal Office 31 January 1947 having been delivered to Ernest A. Judd, Long Beach, California on 6 January 1947.

Thus ends the saga of the L.S.M. 9

DONALD JAMES MARTIN (D.J.) - Born June 1, 1925 Bronx, New York. Brought to Staten Island , New York as an infant and has spent his whole life in Staten Island. Entered Navy, August, 1943. Boot camp and signal school, Sampson, New York, Little Creek, VA and L.S.M. 9 back to Sampson, New York in charge of German war prisoner's at hospital unit. Discharged April 1946. Plank holder L.S.M. 9. Raised flag May 27, 1944. Decommissioned December 20, 1945, still have flag. L.S.M. 9 serviced South Pacific, New Guinea New Britian then to Leyet, Samar, Luzon and Okinawa. L.S.M. 9 was seventh assault wave on Purple Beach Two, April 1 with three Sherman Pontoon tanks that actually could float left Okinawa April 25th with hull damage. Left Pearl Harbor September 1945 for Long Beach, California on Magic Carpet Duty.

Entered U.S.P.O. after discharge, spent 35 years raising top rank of Station Manager. Retired 1984, married Virginia 1955. Have seven children, the last were twin girls. Have six Grandchildren. Presently holding position as sexton in Parish church.

HISTORY OF U.S.S. L.S.M. 9

BUILT BY:

BROWN SHIPBUILDING CO. ,
HOUSTON, TEXAS

KEEL LAID:
LAUNCHED:

11 MARCH 1944
24 APRIL 1944

COMMISSIONED:
DECOMMISSIONED:

27 MAY 1944
20 DECEMBER 1945

13 DIVISION 7 SQUADRON 3RD FLOTILLA
7th FLEET AMPHIBIOUS FORCES

INTERNATIONAL CALL SIGN:
VOICE RADIO:
VISUAL:

NEGATIVE-VICTOR-AFFIRM-QUEEN
POODLE 9
X-RAY 4009

OFFICERS:
ROBERT E. OLSON
HENRY P. BADGETT
RAYMOND A. BISWANGER
ROBERT R. SINCLAIR
VAN B. FOX
WILLIAM MARINIS

CAPTAIN
EXECUTIVE OFFICER
NAVIGATOR-COMMUNICATIONS
ENGINEERING
SUPPLY
TRAINING

ORIGINAL CREW:

4 OFFICERS
48 ENLISTED MEN

HISTORY COMPILED BY:

D.J. MARTIN SM 3/C

ASSISTED BY:

LT.RAYMOND A. BISWANGER
LT.ROBERT R. SINCLAIR

DATES FROM DECK LOG
INCIDENTS FROM MEMORY